



We're All Feeling the Impact of Recent Events

With recent events dominating the news, keeping yourself and those close to you safe and well must be your highest priority.

While many companies are working very hard to keep everything “business as usual,” company leaders are already planning for the future. They face difficult choices, and the longer they wait, the more likely they are to take more decisive steps. Without regard as to whether this approach is right or wrong, *it's happening*, at many organizations, *right now*. In our article below, we examine the challenge of finding the correct balance of in-house or marketing agencies.

Balancing In-House Marketing Teams vs. Agencies in 2022

As part of your planning cycle, marketing organizations are continually examining and re-examining how to balance the mix of in-house marketing teams vs. agencies. According to a [2019 Gartner Marketing Operational Survey](#), companies shifted more work to in-house marketing teams from outside agencies in 2018.

Key drivers include the ability to better respond to emerging marketing and business opportunities, delivering higher value, and changing from tactical execution to a more strategic role in directing implementing their [marketing strategy](#).

Moving in-house also reduces their dependency on outside agencies. However, not everything is shifting in-house. Companies are generally looking first to centralize control and management, and then choosing the best mix of both in-house teams and partners for their [marketing operations plan](#).

And moving work in-house presents a range of challenges.

Balancing In-House vs. Agency Hiring

- **Hiring the right talent takes time.** Even if qualified applicants are available, it can take two to three months to hire someone and several months for them to become productive within your organization.
- **Lean teams.** Most marketing teams staff for typical workloads, with a small buffer for the occasional urgent or unplanned projects.
- **Increasing workloads.** With constantly shifting priorities and a rapidly changing business climate, in-house teams struggle to keep up with demand.
- **Skills gaps reduce agility.** You have a fully staffed team, but lack expertise in specific areas that impact your ability to respond quickly to shifting priorities.

- **Focus on execution reduces the time to think strategically.** Often the first area to suffer is your marketing strategy. Getting the work done is crucial, but so is ensuring your skills and technology align with company objectives and strategy.
- **External events.** The weather, health crises, and civil disruption may throw normal operations into disarray, limiting your ability to sustain normal marketing operations.

When companies are short-handed, or lack skills, partners can quickly fill the void with highly qualified people, ensuring that projects stay on schedule. They can also help with routine day-to-day activities. With short notice, they can dedicate one or several people to your company. These are experienced people who work with you and your organization to fill the current gap.

Working with a partner organization also gives you access to new ideas and insights at every level, from creative to technology. From tactical tasks like subscription lists or optimizing subject lines to upgrading and adding new applications to your Martech stack, a partner working with many clients brings a wealth of experience!

At the same time, partners give new users at your company opportunities for hands-on experience (and interaction with more experienced users) and can help them to become much more proficient, and much more profitable, much more quickly.

And if recent events have taught us anything, you can never be fully prepared for every contingency. Partners can help when external forces impact your business.

How Partners Provide Value to Marketing Operations Teams

- **Multi-faceted expertise:** Partners will know critical areas that a new or even experienced employee may not have. And they can easily tap into expertise from other partner employees as necessary.
- **Get a lot of work done quickly:** Emerging opportunities or urgent projects can outstrip available resources. A partner can frequently bring many people to bear on a problem, solving it quickly and efficiently.
- **Outsource tactical production work:** Move some of your day-to-day [campaign services](#) work, to keep up with the workload, or free up time for more strategic planning by your team.
- **Skills training for your team:** Leverage your partners for both formal and informal training for your organization - the kind of training after exposure to multiple successful projects across many clients.
- **A broad perspective on what is possible:** A partner with many clients brings you a much broader experience base across all aspects of marketing operations. You can then tap into this experience and add it to your organization.

Getting the Most from Your Agency

While partners can quickly fill gaps and respond when demand is high, challenges remain. However, working with partners has never been easier with these simple solutions.

Partners do not spend much time in your office

When working with any partner or consultant, they usually don't spend a lot of their time in your office. For many companies, face to face conversations is crucial for continued success. However, there are simple solutions to stay connected:

- **Use video conferencing for weekly, even daily check-in!** With today's internet speeds and cameras now in every computer, tablet, and phone, adding video to your conversations is easy.
- **Schedule periodic face to face meetings.** Consider budgeting for the partner to regularly visit your office every 3-6 months (or more!).
- **Setup quarterly one-on-one meetings.** Just as you would with an employee, find 30 minutes once a quarter to give some feedback. Don't only provide feedback to the company. Provide input to the specific person working with you. It's incredible what even a little feedback can do!
- **Maintain an executive-to-executive connection.** Create and maintain a relationship between a partner executive and one of your key stakeholders. It bridges the connection between companies at higher levels and provides more ROI, and a "bigger picture" to supplement day to day interactions.

Naturally, there are many more management methods you can use, but those listed here can help you to enhance a partner relationship greatly. The next challenge is cost.

Tough Times: Executives Use Different Calculations when Cutting Expenses

Budget cuts don't always seem to make sense for a variety of political and financial reasons,

For example, you may look at someone's salary of \$100k and be required to cut them while simultaneously receiving permission to spend an additional \$100k on an agency? It would seem like a wash, right?

However, execs, CFOs, and Human Resources departments have a unique way of calculating. An employee's salary often has an "overhead factor" attached to it that goes above and beyond what the company pays for health care and taxes.

That overhead may include a portion of your building & office expenses, HR dept expenses, managerial

expenses, projected possible termination expenses, etc., meaning that the core salary of 100k, can quickly jump to 2x, 3x, and even 4x what the person takes home.

Now compare your \$100k agency with your \$400k employee, and one can start to understand the rationale behind these decisions.

Also, an agency's hours are quickly accelerated or slowed. Have another \$100k to spend next month? Many agencies would say, "Let's go!" However, hiring and training somebody to be fully productive by next month may be unrealistic. Often companies project 60 days to hire and 60 days more before full productivity.

And the reverse is also true. Need to your agency to be "turned off" quickly, and to tell them "Sorry, please cut \$100k next month", with the right contract, it is usually substantially easier than letting someone go. This financial flexibility often appeals to executives.

Expense (or Perceived Expenses)

It may seem as if "partners don't come cheap." And in the current environment, where hiring is difficult, partners are also "in demand."

One of the best ways to mitigate the costs of working with a partner is to plan thoroughly and negotiate for quantity discounts.

Some partners can steeply discount their services if:

- You only need basic "operations" services like segmentation, email sends and landing page creation
- You buy a significant number of hours, for a long enough time.

Of course, both of those items often come into play. So don't forget to ask, "Do you offer quantity discounts for a certain number of hours or certain types of services?" Even if a company doesn't have a formal policy in this area (and 4Thought Marketing does), they may be open to something informal better suit both the Eloqua Partner and yourself.

A partner can help you through periods when you're short-handed, and they can even become a longer-term adviser that you can rely upon through the ups and downs of regular business cycles. They can provide a kind of consistency that you may not be able to find in a volatile hiring market.

Contact us if you're experiencing marketing operations staffing, skills, production capacity issues, or completing high-quality projects on time. We're experts helping Oracle Eloqua and Oracle Marketing Cloud customers optimize their marketing operations. Learn more about available [services](#).